State and Private Forestry Redesign Initiative

Contact Information:	Texas Forest Service FRD& SF College Station, TX 77840-7896
Project Name:	Texas Emerging Communities Initiative: Managing High-Velocity Change
Project Lead:	James Rooni, Chief Regional Forester Texas Forest Service, Austin, TX
Project Location:	State of Texas
Expected Completion:	Phase I: Q4 2008 Phase II: Q4 2009 Phase III: Q4 2010

Partnering Organizations:

Texas City Management Association (TCMA), Texas Municipal League (TML), County / City / Municipal Government, non- profit organizations including: Texas Trust for Public Lands, Texas Nature Conservancy, Prairie Land Trust, Keep Texas Beautiful, Envision Central Texas, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center; State and Federal Natural Resource agencies including: Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas A&M Cooperative Extension, NRCS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, FireCAP, Texas Master Naturalists, Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC).

Abstract: Texas is changing. Due to unprecedented population increases and land turn over from traditional agriculture to urban use, Texas communities are expanding at an explosive pace. Currently, Texas follows only Florida with the number of fastest growing counties in the nation. In many rapidly developing Texas communities, unchecked growth and development in and around forest and other natural areas is resulting in a negative impact on these ecosystems and, in turn, a negative impact on the quality of life for the community and its citizens. Many of these growing communities could not have envisioned their current need for either a comprehensive Urban Forest Management or a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Technology and resources are now available to assist these communities in recognizing the value of these effective resource management tools and integrating them into development codes and ordinances. These new tools will enable communities to recognize, preserve, and protect the forest ecosystem and other natural resource assets and the benefits they provide. These benefits include soil, air and water quality, wildlife habitat, natural cooling resulting from the reduction of daytime ambient air temperatures, aesthetics, community wildfire safety, eco-tourism, view-scapes, real estate value, outdoor recreation, and many others. These are the areas where the Texas Forest Service (TFS) and its partners would like to provide focused leadership and community assistance through the *Texas Emerging Communities Initiative*.

Project Budget: *Total Federal Funding Request and State Match*

Description	Phase I *(FY 2008)*	Phase II *(FY 2009)*	Phase III *(FY 2010)*
Salaries:	$225,000	$220,000	$250,000
Travel:	10,000	20,000	32,000
ECI Partnership Grants:	-	190,000	378,000
Product Development:	135,000	55,000	45,000
Product Delivery:	5,000	15,000	30,000
Total Federal Request:	**$375,000**	**$500,000**	**$735,000**
Total State Match:	375,000	500,000	735,000

Project Description: Ultimately, the challenge faced by leaders of these Texas communities will be to devise reasonable, affordable, and effective ways in which to grow, develop, and protect their communities while also integrating the critically important contributions made by forest ecosystems and natural areas. The goal of TFS and the *Emerging Communities Initiative* is to identify and empower these rapidly growing Texas communities to manage their resources by providing them with a natural resource assistance network. This network of local, state, public, and private organizations can assist community leaders with the development and integration of valuable proactive management tools and technical support systems needed to address these important natural resource issues. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to prepare communities for high-velocity growth before it happens - not after.

The funding of this proposal will occur throughout three phases.

Phase I: Program Development: TFS and its partners will obtain the technology, staffing, and outreach resources needed to develop the actual program training modules, support materials and delivery mechanisms. These materials will be designed to deliver the most pertinent, timely, and meaningful information available, and deliver it in an efficient and effective manner. To properly target these deliver efforts, TFS will utilize various GIS technology to identify areas of rapid urban growth and expansion. These GIS spatial models and analysis tools will include the *Theobald GAP Analysis* and *UPLAN urban density/ land-use impact models*, the *Southern Forest Land Assessment* (SFLA) to analyze critical natural resource areas in the state, and the *Southern Fire Risk Assessment System* (SWFRA) which will measure wildfire danger and other human health and safety risks as they may exist around these communities.

Phase II & III: Integrated Program Delivery: Once the high growth areas and corresponding communities are identified, TFS along with its various partners will begin Phases II and III which will consist of networking with these community leaders to promote and coordinate and deliver an intensive one or two day Emerging Communities Workshop. These regional training programs will be specifically designed for community leaders, planners, and emergency response organizations and will focus on a number of emerging issues based on the specific needs of each respective community. The workshops will feature presentations and training sessions from regional experts. The program agendas can also be customized to include any or all of the following focus areas:

- **Urban and Community Forestry**: *Effective Development and Integration of Comprehensive BMP for Tree Inventories, Urban Forest Management Plans, and Conservation Easements.*

- **Green Urbanism:** *Guidelines for Developers & Urban Planners.*

- **Community Wildfire Risk Assessment:** *Assessing and Managing Wildfire Risk in Texas Communities by addressing structure ignitability, fuels treatments, and rapid coordinated response.*

- **Forest Health Programs***: Insect / Disease Identification & Management, Invasive Species, and Stewardship planning for Communities and Non-Industrial Private Landowners.*

- **Grants & Funding:** *Locating Sources of Cooperative Grants and / or Technical Assistance.*

- **Changing Roles (Wildland Urban Interface Development Program):** *Introduction of the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) to Community Leaders and Planners.*

- **Water Conservation:** *Water-Wise Programming for Texas Communities.*

- **Watershed Protection:** *Practical Guidelines for Growing Communities.*

The Emerging Communities Workshop will also be made available in the form of a standardized Emerging Communities Training Module (ECTM). The components and support materials for this module can be easily adapted for use in other areas of the country and also for other areas of program emphasis.

Evaluation Criterion Discussion:

National and Regional Relevance: The programs and management tools provided to community leaders through the *Emerging Communities Initiative* will be aligned to enable communities to address and manage local and regional issues which actively address those identified as being of national importance by the SPF Redesign as to Conserve, Protect, and Enhance the forest ecosystem and other natural resource assets of these communities.

Prioritization: The *Emerging Communities Initiative* will be targeted in and around those areas that have been assessed as high impact areas. These determinations will be based partly on data derived from the Southern Forest Land Assessment which will analyze and identify critical natural resource areas in the state. Data from the Southern Fire Risk Assessment System will also studied to locate communities in danger of potential wildfire events and other human health and safety risks.

Meaningful Scale: The Emerging Communities Workshop will be made available in the form of a standardized Emerging Communities Training Module (ECTM). The training components and support materials for this module can be easily adapted for use in other areas of the country and also for other areas of program emphasis.

Collaboration: The planning and execution of the Texas Emerging Communities Initiative will rely heavily on a diverse collaboration of existing and potential partners which may include: Texas City Management Association (TCMA), Texas Municipal League (TML), County / City / Municipal Government, non- profit organizations including: Texas Trust for Public Lands, Texas Nature Conservancy, Prairie Land Trust, Keep Texas Beautiful, Envision Central Texas, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center; State and Federal Natural Resource agencies including: Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD), Texas A&M Cooperative Extension, NRCS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, FireCAP, Texas Master Gardeners and Naturalist Programs, Texas Soil and Conservation Board, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC).

Outcomes: Performance measures used to gauge the efficacy of this effort will include: Program Satisfaction Surveys from Participating Communities, Number of Workshops Conducted, Number of Cities Enrolled, Number of Partnering Agencies Involved, Number of Participants, and Number of Requests for TFS Urban and Community Forestry, Forest Health, and Community Wildfire Planning Program Assistance as a direct result of this workshop.

Technology: To properly target the efforts of the Emerging Communities Initiative, TFS will utilize various GIS technology to identify areas of rapid urban growth and expansion. These GIS spatial models and analysis tools will include the *Theobald GAP Analysis* and *UPLAN urban density / land – use impact models*, the *Southern Forest Land Assessment* (SFLA) to analyze critical natural resource areas in the state, and the *Southern Fire Risk Assessment System* (SFRAS) which will measure wildfire danger and other human health and safety risks as they may exist around these communities.

Integrated Delivery: To promote integrated program delivery, components of this grant will be implemented in coordination with existing TFS programs and technical analysis projects to identify these growth areas and corresponding communities. TFS along with its various partners will begin actively contacting and networking with these community leaders to promote, coordinate and initiate an intensive one or two day Emerging Communities Workshops. These workshops will feature presentations and training sessions from experts on a wide variety of local, regional, and national resource and resource management issues.

Leverage: The programmatic goals and outreach objectives of the *Emerging Communities Initiative* are those shared by numerous public and private organizations who share a mission to provide sustainable land-use programs to communities throughout Texas and the nation. This project will rely heavily on these partnerships for both development and delivery phases of this initiative. As a major component of this proposal, it is intent of TFS to actively seek, involve and leverage available resources from multiple partners throughout the life of this project.

Influence Positive Change: The ultimate goal of this initiative is to prepare communities for high-velocity growth before it happens - not after. Through the leveraging and cooperation of multiple partners will come shared experience and insight from those who have witnessed and were faced with the management challenges associated with high-velocity growth. This initiative will pull upon those actual case studies, both successful and unsuccessful, which will provide effective insight and perspectives needed to promote the conservation, protection, and enhancement of community forest ecosystems and other natural resource areas.

Timeliness: The timeline allocated to allow the *Emerging Communities Initiative* to reach full outreach capacity has been set at three years: FY 2008-2010.